



NASW

National Association of Social Workers / Connecticut Chapter

2139 Silas Deane Highway
Suite 205
Rocky Hill, CT 06067

Karen Bullock, Ph.D., LCSW
Stephen A Karp, MSW, Executive Director
naswct@naswct.net (860) 257-8066

**Appropriations Committee
Budget Public Hearing
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Good evening members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Marcia Bok and I am testifying this evening on behalf of the CT. Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers in relation to several DCF and DSS bills being considered by the Appropriations Committee. There are actually two areas I would like to consider. In relation to DSS I will comment on several job training bills and TANF; and in relation to DCF I would like to comment on foster care and, adoptions and homelessness among DCF youth.

In relation to job training, several days ago I submitted testimony to human services against proposed cuts to education and training and economic development. The main issue I would like to reiterate tonight is one we have addressed previously; and that has to do with reforming welfare reform into a genuine anti-poverty program. For years now in exercising the work first mandate of TANF, we have neglected education and training. As a result of these policies, and especially in these times of grave unemployment, individuals leave welfare and then often need to depend on other safety net programs for their individual and family survival. This revolving door drives up the needs and costs of additional services when, in fact, we should be helping individuals and families to become self-sufficient. Job training and economic development, and the proposed jobs first pilot program, are very important steps in the direction of jobs creation, higher level employment and self-sufficiency for low-income individuals. This could definitely cut other costs!

Regarding foster care, adoption and homelessness among DCF youth, these issues are clearly related. I would also like to add that the Office of the Child Advocate works very hard to make the connections between these programs. Again, in these times of economic hardship it seems particularly untimely to cut funds for foster care and adoption. Even in the best of times, we know there is a shortage of foster homes; how many children languish in foster care without permanent homes; and how this is obviously related to homelessness. As children age out of the DCF system, without a permanent family, this is a recipe for homelessness - with many young adults landing in shelters or on the streets. There are many connections that need to be made to prevent these situations, but certainly greater investments in foster care and adoption and homeless prevention and other services are a crucial part of this solution.

We know you all care – we need to solve these problems together. Thank you for your attention to these important matters.